



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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PRESS RELEASE

Date: October 26, 2022

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BOARD APPROVES SEPTIC ORDINANCE CHANGES

The County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday approved amendments to a new ordinance designed to protect homebuyers and make it easier for residents to receive permits for septic repairs and upgrades under new state wastewater rules.

In 1999, the State legislature passed AB 885 to enhance environmental protections by ensuring septic systems aren't contaminating local water resources. The law was not fully implemented for over a decade, and now governs 1.2 million septic systems throughout California. The legislation requires enhanced septic systems for some new construction or in cases where environmental concerns include threats to groundwater and local habitat.

In 2021, the County won approval from the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board to implement a Local Area Management Plan (LAMP), which allows the County to approve most septic permits locally without requiring residents to apply to the State under AB 885. This reduced the layers of bureaucracy for residents, including CZU Fire survivors, to install, replace or expand septic systems.

The changes approved Tuesday are intended to protect homebuyers and the environment by assuring septic systems are in good working order prior to any change in ownership or are sufficient to meet the needs of any home expansion remodels. Not all septic systems are subject to the new Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (OWTS) rules, which are triggered only in certain circumstances, including a system replacement, sale or major remodel or bedroom addition(s)

Under rules which go into effect July 1, 2023, sellers of homes with septic systems must have those systems professionally pumped and inspected and provide buyers a standard disclosure as part of any sale. For properties subject to enhanced septic system requirements under AB 885, sellers are required to disclose any active annual service agreements and provide documentation related to those services. Needed repairs are the responsibility of the seller unless the buyer and seller agree to transfer those responsibilities to the buyer.

For more information on the Local Agency Management Plan, please visit <https://scceh.com/NewHome/Programs/LandUse/LocalAgencyManagementProgram.aspx>